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GYPSY VERSES

BY HELEN HAY WHITNEY





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GYPSY VERSES

Gypsy Verses

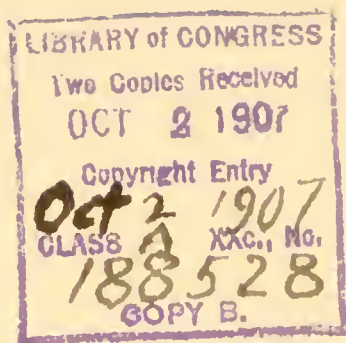
By
HELEN HAY WHITNEY

AUTHOR OF
"Some Verses," "The Bed Time Book."



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Ms. A. 9. 2. 13.

To
G. V. W.
because she is my friend

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GYPSY VERSES

*Oh, you were not so idle—
You wore a sprig of green;
You wore a feather in your cap,
The reddest ever seen.*

*Your face was laughing gypsy brown,
Your eyes were of the blue;
You wandered up and down the world,
For you had much to do.*

*For oh, you were not idle,
Whatever men might say—
You made the colour of the year
Magnificent and gay.*

ATARAH

WITH painted slender folded hands
She waited what might come,
Her head was tyred with jewelled bands,
Her mouth was sweet and dumb.

Her cymar was of ardassine,
Fire red from throat to hem,
Broidered with Turkis stones therein—
She gave her soul for them.

Faint cassia and love-haunted myrrh
Made perilous her hair,
And what was Sidon's woe to her
Whose face was king's despair?

Nor life nor love from those cold lips,
But ah, in what degree,
Her passionate lover leans and sips
Her death-bright poesy.

AGE

BLINDNESS, and women wailing on white seas,
Seas where no placid sails have ever been,
Dreams like wan demons on waste marshes
seen

Thro' dulling, fevered eyes. The dregs and lees
Of wine long spilt to dead divinities.

Grey, empty days when Spring is never green,
Can the heart answer what these riddles
mean—

Can the life hold such hopelessness as these?

Love lying low in the long pleasant grass,
Youth with his eager face against the sun,
They may not guess the hours when these shall
pass,

In what drear coin such lovely dreams are paid,
At what grim cost their flowery days are won,
When man is old and lonely and afraid.

LOVE AND DAWN

DAWN shaking long light pennons in the East—
Is love the least
And love the greatest of the morning's woes?
See how the rose
Breaks in a hundred petals down the sky.
Darkness must die,
And in the heart, where flutters sad desire,
Wakes the new fire
Silver and azure of the open day.
So, grief, away!
We will be glad with flagons, drown old pain,
And Dawn shall bring us to her own again.

L'AMOUR AMBIGUEUX

You are the dreams we do not dare to dream,
The dim florescence of a mystic rose,
In poverty or pride love comes and goes,
We do not question what the deeps may seem
Launched on the steady current of the stream.
Gaily and hardily we hear the prose;
In youth, red sun, in age the charnel snows.
Nor see the banks where subtle flowers gleam,
In green sweet beds of moly and of thyme
Wild as an errant fancy. All the while
We know you, mystic rose; we know your
smile,
Your deep, still eyes, your fragrant floating
hair,
The peacock purple of the gown you wear,
O lyric alchemist of rune and rhyme!

SAPPHICS

LEAVE the Vine, Ah Love, and the wreath of
 myrtle,
Leave the Song, to die, on the lips of laughter,
Come, for love is faint with the choric measure,
 Weary of waiting.

Down the sky in lines of pellucid amber
Blows the hair of her whom the gods have treas-
 ured,
Fair, more fair is mine in the ring of maidens,
 Mine for the taking.

SATAN, PRINCE
OF DARKNESS

I SINNED, but gloriously. I bore the fall
From Heaven's high places as becomes a king.
I did not shrink before the utmost sting
Of torture or of banishment. The pall
Of Dis, I cried, should be the hall
Where sad proud men of men should meet
and sing
The woes of that defeat ambitions bring
Hurled from the last vain fight against the wall.

I thought I had been punished. To forego
All lovely sights, the whisper of fresh rain,
To brood forever endlessly on pain
Yet still a Prince, Ah God, I dreamed,—and
then

I learned my Fate, this wandering to and fro
In Devil's work among the sons of men.

IN PRISON

ABOVE her task the long year through
 She works with steady hands,
The while her heart is tired with dreams
 Which no man understands.

For long and long ago she knew
 Green trees and open sky,
Before the law condemned her days
 To doom until she die.

And so she dreams in mystic peace,
 Indifferent to the scene,
Because her heart retains and knows
 The little stain of green.

GHOSTS

THE long lost lights of love I know,
They thrill from ultimate space, they blow
Like small bewildered stars, tossed high
On some unknown and passionate sky.

I know them for the loved lost lights
That made the glamour of my nights
Long, long ago, and now I fear
Their coming, and the garb they wear.

For they are very white and cold,
They are not coloured as of old,
In trailing radiance, rose and red,
For these are ghosts, and they are dead.

LILIS

WE have forgiven you because you are so fair,
Eloquent by virtue of your dark enchanting
eyes,
Evil to your heart of hearts, shall we blame or
care,
You are very beautiful, and love has made
you wise.

With a splendid insolence you exist to sin,
Scorn us for the weaknesses that bring us to
our pain.
Weak you are and false you are and never may
we win,
Yet we have forgiven you, and shall forgive
again.

THE OLD WOMEN

WE are very, very old,
 We have had our day,
So we bend above our work
 While the others play.

Do they call us women, we
 Gaunt and grey and grim,
Hideous and sexless things
 Weak of brain and limb?

Beauty ended, love long past,
 Yet, when all else flees,
We are women, for we still
 Have our memories.

TO HIPPOLYTUS

It is too late to part. I dreamed a dream
That love had loosed me, that no more your
name

Should vex my soul, for very pride and shame
I hid you out of mind; I said, The stream
Has grown too wide between us, it would seem
To sunder even memory. Your fame
Rang hollow on my ear, and then you came
And love laughed for the lie he would redeem.

It is too late. Love will not let me go.
The bare suns burn me, and the strong winds
blow;

I take them fearlessly, for I am wise
At last; for being yours I must be brave,
Tho' you give nothing, still am I your slave,
The light within my heart your eyes, your
eyes.

THE GARDEN HEDGE

I LIVE in a beautiful garden,
All joyous with fountains and flowers;
I reckon not of penance or pardon,
At ease thro' the exquisite hours.

My blossoms of lilies and pansies,
Pale heliotrope, rosemary, rue,
All lull me with delicate fancies
As shy as the dawn and the dew.

But the ghost—Gods—the ghost in the
gloaming,
How it lures me with whispers and cries,
How it speaks of the wind and the roaming,
Free, free, 'neath the Romany skies.

'Tis the hedge that is crimson with roses,
All wonderfully crimson and gold,
And caged in my beautiful closes
I know what it is to be old.

THE SLAVE
WOMAN

HER eyes are dark with unknown deeps,
 Old woes and new despair,
Her shackled spirit feels the thong
 That breaks her body bare.

The savage master of her days
 Who mocks her passive pain,
How should he know her scorn of him.
 Indifferent to the stain?

For in her heart she sees the glow
 Of sacrificial fires,
A priestess of a mystic rite
 Performed on nameless pyres.

The incident of shame and toil
 She takes with idle breath,
For she remembers Africa,
 And what to her is death?

SONG

THE sky is more blue than the eyes of a boy,
A riot of roses entangles the year;
Ah, come to me, run to me, fill me with joy,
Dear, dear, dear.

The air is a passion of perfume and song,
The little moon swings up above, look
above,
I cannot wait longer, I've waited so long,
Love, love, love.

SANS-JOY

HIDE your eyes, Angels, beneath your gold phylacteries,

Israfel will charm you with the magic of his song:

Yet you will not smile for him, by reason of your memories,

For Lucifer is absent, and the cry goes up,
How long!

For his expiation you would give your dreams and destinies,

Paradise is clouded by the measure of your pain;

Hide your eyes, Angels, beneath your gold phylacteries,

Till the jasper gates swing wide to bring him home again.

OUT OF THE JUNGLE

OUT of the jungle he came, he came,
Man of the lion's breed,
His heart was fire and his eyes were flame,
And he piped on a singing reed.

Spring was sweet and keen in his blood,
Singing, he sought his mate,
The wife for the life and time of his mood,
Formed for his needs by fate.

Over his reed he piped and sang,
His eyes were the eyes of a man,
But the jungle knew how his changes rang,
For his heart was the heart of Pan.

IN PORT

WAVE buffeted and sick with storm,
The ships came reeling in,
The harbour lights were kind and warm,
And yet, so hard to win.

Like wings, the tired sails fluttered
down,
While night began to fall,
Then came, sea-scarred, toward the
town,
The smallest ship of all.

At last in harbour, safe and still,
No more she need be brave,
No more she'd meet the winds' rough
will,
The wanton of each wave.

IN PORT

The harbour lights ! but where the moon
Should murmur blessings bright,
Clouded instead the dread typhoon,
That thundered down the night.

What curse the luring harbour bore
Of false security ;
The port held desolation more
Than boasted all the sea.

When morning came with leering lip,
What death lay on her breast,
And oh ! the little weary ship
Was wrecked with all the rest.

SONNY BOY

(A bust by H. F.)

GRAVE as a little god, erect and wise,

He dares the years that open to his gaze.

Brave in his charming beauty, he portrays

A bright eternal youth, and in his eyes

Sweet moons that are no more. No sad surprise

Has gloomed the gay adventure of his ways,

And from the flower-lit meadow of the days

He leaps clean-hearted to life's enterprise.

SUNRISE

THERE was a cry from the sky,
A cry at night;
It wakened the breeze in the trees
When the moon was white;
And I, only I,
Adrift on life's terrible seas,
Read the cry aright.

Pennants of gold were unrolled,
They told of sun;
Night's pain with the dark and the
rain,
Was over and done.
The travail of old
Had passed from the mother again,
And the fight was won.

SUNRISE

There was a cry from the sky,
And my soul was torn
With a passion divine, as of wine,
From the breast of morn;
For I, only I,
Knew the cry as the signal and sign
That love was born.

DEAD LADIES

THAIS and Lalage, your eyes are closed,
Phryne, Aholibah, your lips are dust.
Your tinkling feet are idle and composed,
All your gold beauty vanished into rust.

Nor Dionysian mysteries taught you this,
Since the gold serpent was your seal and
sign;
Tho' deathless be the imprint of your kiss,
The lips that redden are not yours, but mine.

How you would scorn us, Lalage, the lure
Of your mad moments, us, the motley crew;
Yet shall your beauty only so endure
Imperishable, that we sing of you.

WHEN TRISTAN
SAILED

WHEN Tristan sailed from Ireland
Across the summer sea,
How young he was, how debonnaire,
How glad he was and free.
Why should he know the gales would
blow,
The skies be black above,
How should he dream his port was
Death,
And Doom, whose name is Love?

The Lady Iseult, sweet as prayer,
We hardly dare to pray,
Pearl-pale beneath her shadow hair,
Grows fairer day by day,

WHEN TRISTAN SAILED

The ichor gains her spring-kissed
veins,

Her skies the eyes of youth.
How should she dream the ichor Love,
Was hellebore in truth?

So Tristan sailed from Ireland
As youth must always sail;
He quaffed the cup, nor asked the wine;
He dared, nor feared to fail.
And be it poison, be it life,
Or wrecks that strew the shore,
Tristan set forth! nor ask the end,
Else youth shall sail no more.

THE BATTLE

AH, never, never, never! for the flag
Is twined about my body, and my back
Is braced against the wall! I know the lack
Of crust and water, and a man might brag
For fighting thus, yet—how a soul may lag,
For want of just so little, when the rack
Of hopeless strife from dawn to bivouac
Finds the foe now who storms the utmost crag.

Never surrender! You who storm my heart
Till I am faint with love and hunger, all
Starved for your lips—how can I say “depart”?
And yet—drag up the sword again—and thrust!
Ah, Love, mine enemy—I will not fall
Until my honour's flag and I are dust.

RECOMPENSE

THOSE who ask for a star
Often receive but a stone,
Yet they asked for a star,
Does the high thought not atone?

I, who asked but a stone,
A plaything of azure or red,
May I count it for gain
That I won a star instead?

THE LOTUS EATERS

WE have no rain, we have no sun,
We only watch the moments run
 Like little adders thro' the leaves,
Lost ere their flitting has begun.

The cool light airs that fan our brow,
What aromatic sweets they know!
 The tall tired trees that make our sky
Are lapped in spices as they bow.

The bright-eyed flowers that form our bed,
Like eager jewels, blue and red,
 Seem brimmed with gay immortal life,
Yet we dream on when they are dead.

LOST APHRODITE

THE gods upon the hills no more are seen,
 Couched on the virginal green,
No more their cry upon the silence grieves,
 The shadow of dark leaves.

The blazonry of Spring must now abate,
 Without the purple state
Of Aphrodite, amorous and frail,
 Cinctured with lilies pale.

She who was love and every man's desire,
 Now only can inspire,
The mutual love of mortals, and alone
 Like wind her plaints are blown.

About the unregarding world her hands
 Yearn forth across the lands
Once passionate with her lovers, but in vain,
 They will not come again!

LOST APHRODITE

She who was Aphrodite, tho' she gives
Love to each heart that lives,
Gives and receives not. She, of love the
breath,
Doomed now with utter death.

THE FOOLS

ON the wrist a paroquet,
 Motley on the shoulder,
We exist for joy of life,
 Never growing older.

Dancing down the lane of years,
 Rosy garlands trailing,
Who would pause for time or tears,
 Barren days bewailing.

Brighter burden never were
 Than the smiles we scatter,
Loving deeds and laughing love,
 This is our great matter.

And the wise who scorn our bells
 Mate with melancholy,
We are wiser than the wise,
 Holding hands with folly.

THE AWAKENING

PERHAPS the world is tired of pageantries,
And all the weary women called the Hours,
Jaded with jewels, shall exchange for flowers
Their badge of pride. In violet harmonies,
With sweet blue veils of silence o'er their eyes,
They shall return to Spring's most languor-
ous bowers;
And Light and Beauty shall come down as
showers
Releasing life from all its pedantries.

Only the bloomy purple hill to see
Thro' half-closed lids, and only to be blind
With asphodils! Shall these things ever be?
Surely the time is ripe to live for this
Dawn, springing radiant from her sleep to
find
A world of lovers waiting for her kiss.

THE DARK WOMAN

My dark, wild woman of the braes,
I know your heart, I know your ways,
I know the raw, sweet food you taste,
I love the colours 'round your waist.

Ribbons of green and gold you wear,
Threaded about your shadowy hair,
My colours—and your eyes are mine,
Dark as the deeps of love—and wine.

I wake with you at budding Dawn,
Leaving this life of dew-spread lawn,
To join your spirit in the wild,
Your brother, lover, or your child.

Take me upon your savage breast,
Teach me your calms and your unrest.
Take me, I know the jungle cry,
Teach me your love, or let me die.

SUMMER SONG

MY heart's a yellow butterfly
That flutters down the road;
A beggar, tricksy, dancing thing
That scorns a fixed abode.

The aigrette of the thistle bloom
Becomes the swinging sign
Of merry hostelries, where I
May pause awhile and dine.

The sky is lapis lazuli
Bestrewn by clouds of pearl,—
Who would not be a butterfly
Instead of just a girl?

SERAPHIS

HE tasted dragon's blood
From the dark dragon tree,
In those far islands where the mood
Is faery-like and free.

With cinnamon and nard
His strange gay clothes were sweet,
His lips were fanciful with fard,
Red flames played 'round his feet.

Sharp dancing pointed flames,
Detached as butterflies,
He called them all by secret names,
They were his ecstasies.

No love, no maiden bright
Might woo him from his swoon,
For he had tasted strange delight
In lands beyond the moon.

VENGEMENT

WHAT was his offense to you,
You who sit thro' dreamless days,
Sifting thro' your fingers slim
Ashes in a porphyry vase?

Hatred makes your eyes grow hard,
As you conjure forth his name
From the dust that was his face,
From the heart that was his flame.

Then she, lifting heavy eyes,
Spoke: "When this man walked
the world
Him I loved, he loved not me;
So his days to death I hurled.

"Dying, then, he touched my hand,
Smiled and whispered, 'I forgive';
This his vengeance on my soul,
I must hate him while I live."

AUTUMN LOVE

I

ONCE I could love this season of the year,
And watch the calm and delicate decline
Of Summer gladly ; I could see the pine
Deep green on bluest sky, and laugh for cheer
Of very living. Yet I'd fain appear
Th' unhurried gourmet, tasting of my wine,
Lingering o'er memories of the purpled vine,
Loath for each passing moment. Ah, my dear,
Now like a careless child, I toss the hours
Over my shoulder, I forget the sun,
The dewy dawn, the white moon and the flowers.
Like a tired pilgrim with his goal in view,
Looking not right nor left, I run, I run
To that bright day of days that brings me you.

AUTUMN LOVE

II

I feel as murderers feel, who, having slain
Their love, laugh with red hands and do not
care.

I took sweet Summer by her lovely hair,
Bent her white throat, and gladly saw the stain
Crimson her green leaf-gown of hill and plain.

I would not wait for her last kiss, nor spare
One splendid flying hour, for chill and fair
Autumn, my love, comes near me thro' the
rain.

Pale with mysterious wonder, her deep eyes
Are wells of wisdom; fugitive, astray
From a blue land that dreams beyond the skies.
'Tis done. I lay young Summer on her pyre,
And turning, burn thro' distance to the day
That brings me to the lips of my desire.

THE WITCH

WHENCE came the fire in her eyes, eyes of a
beast in the jungle,

Desperate, golden and green, wild as a river
in spate?

Her long lithe limbs were brown, and she took
the world as a leopard,

Grave, disdainful and strong, takes of his
prey without hate.

Glamourie slept in her eyes, terribly calm in
the tumult,

Hidden and secret and sweet was the smile
of her crimson mouth.

A marigold wound in her hair, she swayed like
wind in the desert,

Burning and thrilling to thirst the hearts
that dream of the South.

THE WITCH

Whence came the fire in her eyes? I, only I,
knew the secret,
The thing that hung on her breast, hid by
her stormy hair,
Amber drops on a string, her talisman, witches'
amber,
Golden, yellow and brown, that only a witch
may wear.

THE MAN

THE flame is spent, I can no more
Hold the tall candle by your door.
Too often have I watched to see
Your lagging steps come home to me.

The Tyrian traders taught me this.
They came, perfumed with ambergris,
With amethystine robes, and hair
Curled by the kisses of salt air.

They mocked me for my weary hands,
Holding your light as love demands,
They sang the lure of poppied sleep,
Their lips were warm, their eyes were
deep.

The flame is spent! Your pale weak face
Must seek another resting place.
Win me, and hold me now who can!
The Tyrian trader was a man!

DOWN IN
MALDONADO TOWN

THERE'S a town called Maldonado,
That's the place where I would be;
There's a girl in Maldonado,
And she gave her heart to me.

Starved with sixty days of sailing,
How we swaggered to the shore,
Hands in pockets, eyes cocked sideways,
At the girl in every door.

Sweet they fluttered to our shoulders,
She, my girl, the fairest girl,
And I took her for a plaything,
Face of flower and heart of pearl.

Round my neck she clung and pleaded,
But I told her to be wise;
Said no sailor could be faithful,
And his love was ever lies.

DOWN IN MALDONADO TOWN

Then she turned and left me silent,
Stepping weary, stepping slow;
Merry was I to have won her,
And I laughed to see her go.

Now 'tis done—I have lost her,
Seas between us thunder wide,
“Dear,” I said, “I shall forget you,”
And God knows that I have lied!

Many girls have smiled upon me,
Up and down the Northern coast,
But their kisses only taunt me
With the kiss that I have lost.

Oh! You're killing me by inches,
Velvet lips and eyes of brown,
For it's love I left behind me,
Down in Maldonado town.

THE CHOICE

THE long well rose above me, a slim shaft,
With wet, black walls, and high aloft the
light

Round as a moon intensified my night.
I ate the air and bitterly I quaffed
The death damp; nor my pleading nor my craft
Availed to aid me in my desperate plight:
The vista of high heaven the only sight
To see, and at my woe high heaven had laughed.

Suddenly the darkness deepened, and a face
Gloomed on the opening, terrible and grim
An Afreet! In his hands he held disgrace
And direst poverty and ruinous strife.

“Choose now between,” he cried, “calm
Death by him
And Life empoisoned,” yet I cried, “Give
Life.”

THE BROOK

I HAVE a little brook in the deeps of my heart.

What does it matter if the day be chill or
clear,

Coloured like a tourmaline and wingèd like a
dart,

Voiced like a nightingale, it sings all the
year.

Small bright herbs on the banks of the stream,

Moon-pale primroses, and tapestries of fern,
This is the reality and life is just a dream,

Iridescent bubble that the moon tides turn.

AT THE END
OF THE WORLD

To the world's end, to the world's end,
Did I wander seeking you,
And wide was the water and dark was the fell,
With Time at my heels like a hound of hell,
And the worst still left to do.

To the world's end, to the world's end,
And the void to verify.
They told me of a tale of love supreme.
“Sometimes,” I cried, “I have caught the
gleam,
I shall seek it tho' I die.”

At the world's end, at the world's end,
At the end of the endless mile,
Nothing to see but the silent snow—
I turned with my tears to your heart, and lo!
Love was with me all the while!

THE GYPSY

O, she was most precious, as the wind's self was
fair.

What did I give her when I had her on my
knee?

Red kisses for her coral lips, and a red comb
for her hair.

She took my gifts, she took my heart, and
fled away from me.

O, but she was fanciful, she found a savage
mate,

He scorned her, he spurned her, he drove her
from his door;

She cuddled in his inglenook and laughed at
all his hate,

She took his curses, took his blows, and never
left him more.

BOY O' DREAMS

MUST I leave you in the mountains,
 Boy o' dreams,
Must I leave you where the fountains
 Toss the silver of their streams,
Where the trees are clothed in samite,
 And the little broken moon
Is a symbol and an answer,
 Like the reading of a rune?

May I take you to the city,
 Boy o' dreams,
Where your heart will break with pity
 At the lethargy that seems
Only half alive to living,
 Only enemy to mirth,
Where the dusty facts will blind you
 To the fancies of the earth?

BOY O' DREAMS

I must take you—but I'll keep you,
Boy o' dreams,
Where no alien winds shall sweep you,
In a secret place that gleams,
With the light of your own laughter,
Yours the vessel, yours the chart,
And we'll brave the storm together.
You, the captain of my heart.

BALLAD OF THE SLAVE

THE helot got him a hempen cord,
A slave of love was he,
“She made me dance to her circumstance—
In the air one dances free!”

She sits on a throne of ivory
Serene in her silver gown,
“Ah, woe,” he cried, “but the world is wide,
But ’tis straight where I lie down.

“She mocked, she scorned, and she hated me,
She shall pity me not,” he said;
“Too late for the nether way of hate,
I may flout her when I’m dead.”

Out in the dark of the moonless sky,
The rope was round his neck,

BALLAD OF THE SLAVE

“ ’Tis the torque of gold from her throat so
cold,

Why should I rue or reck? ”

Tighter tangled the hempen cord;

“ ’Tis her fingers hot with fire,

In a tempest of fear she draws me near,—

Now dying is not so dire! ”

Black, more black grew the empty void,

“ And I but a broken reed,

For there’s only her face in this grisly place ”—

But his love stood there indeed!

Close to her heart she took his head,

And she kissed him back to breath,

“ You are mine by right of that line of white,

You are mine—by Life and Death! ”

FOAM

I have dallied with wantons, made mad by
their passionate wine,
Time, like a golden ball, I have tossed to the
wastes of the air.

I have whispered with Beauty, whose song has
been sister to mine,
Laughed with the long late hours who lie with
the stars in their hair.

Like the spume on the crest of the wave blow-
ing back to the sea,
Cast from the depths beneath, now to riot and
dance in the light,
I have flung you the foam of my heart, to be
mask unto me,
Caught to my heart again from the doom of
your fugitive sight.

THE SEAL

THE document of day is folded down,
Night, the great lawyer, takes the waiting
sheet,
And o'er the murky shadows of the town
Sets his red seal, to make the deed complete.

RELEASE

I ASKED to be released, I did not know
'Twas hate, not love, that would not let me go.
Vengeance had burned your image on my mind,
I gazed and gazed until my eyes were blind.
Now—neither pride nor love has set me free,
But happy chance—in wonderful degree.

Shackled by memory, a prey to fear,
Once you were mine by the black load I bore,
But now, released, I lose you—O my Dear,
Ever, irrevocably mine no more!

SIN, THE SWORD

SIN was a terrible and ruddy sword,
My hands were only lilies, only made
To lay against his lips, and so I prayed
Another weapon. Willingly I poured
On his strong heart the gifts that could accord
With my life's fact, but Ah! the gifts were
weighed

And all found wanting—and I was afraid
Of love which was so dreadfully my lord.
He showed me the magnificence, the height
To be attained for those who dare to seek,
For those who dare the wonder and delight.
I might attain—I might—but if I should!—

I was afraid, my fainting heart was weak,
And so, Love help me, I was only—good!

FANTASTIC
SPRING

WEAR a lure fantastical,
Farthingales of Spring,
Till the out-worn city hearts
Dance for you and sing.

Lime us with grotesque desires,
Warm with green and gold;
Apathetic we have grown,
Tired and hard and old.

Draw us gently to your truth,
Calm our hopes and fears;
Till at last the grass blades speak
To attentive ears.

SONG

WE only ask for sunshine,
We did not want the rain;
But see the flowers that spring
from showers
All up and down the plain.

We beg the gods for laughter,
We shrink, we dread the tears;
But grief's redress is happiness,
Alternate through the years.

CONTRAST

STEADY stand the ilex trees,
All the leaves are still,
Motionless the opal haze
Drowns on the hill.

There a marble statue waits
Patient of the hours,
Ringed about with silent sun
Over dreamy flowers.

Nature mirrors perfect peace,
Round me everywhere,
Only in my heart is found
Torment and despair.

THE PRICE

WE are so tired of merely being human,
Loving or loved, the sweet imperfect woman.
Masters, you know not what your lips have
missed,
On the rose mouths you keep but to be kissed.

We are Astarte, we are Lilith, we
Know the blue veils which you have named the
sea
Cover the eyes of Isis; that the sky
Is the white body of Neith, arched so on high.

Ours is a secret language, when we smile,
Dreams are denied at birth, all to beguile
Your earthy substance. Ah, at what fell cost
We pay you, so our heritage is lost.

THE KING'S DAUGHTER

SHE was the fairest of the King's fair daughters,

Gold and rubies glittered on her hands;
Her voice was the lilting of a rain of silver waters,

And her lovers were as endless as her lands.
Down thro' the birch wood with her maidens
all about her,

So virginal she came with dainty tread,
At my eyes she was silent,—could a gypsy turn
and flout her:

Love I looked and love I spoke, till white
grew red.

Free she was as fair, she forgot her father's
palace,

Left her lands to wander at my side;
She is crowned with forest leaves, with my two
curved hands for chalice:

Spring and love must bring a gypsy to his
bride.

LAIS

You are white as the moths of Twilight,
You are secret as mist and dew,
And your down-dropped eyes
Are eternally wise,
Strange sins have wrought their hue.

Mother of men and women,
They are ghosts, not men you have bred;
In infinite scorn
Their bodies were born
While their souls were worse than dead.

We are what your lips have made us,
Empty, and bitterly old;
Our faith has lied,
Oh, barren bride,
And the fires of the world are cold.

THE HERITAGE

How shall the present verify the past?

Like flames we strove, still onward, upward
rising,

Spurning the singing continents—at last,

Wrecked on this fatal day of our devising.

Nurtured by lunar rainbows, chill and sweet,

Our fancy was a gossamer of beauty ;

Now like a web it drags about our feet,

Named with the symbols drear of fact and
duty.

We who were heirs to Egypt, India's child,

Suckled by Greece, and cradled by Cathay,

How tacitly we waive this breeding wild,

Deny our parents in our deeds to-day.

Let us awake—obedient to our dreams,

Let us embrace huge issues, comprehending

The scheme entire—Great Beauty's birth,
which seems

The glorious urge for life, unchecked, un-
ending.

THE MONK IN HIS GARDEN

THE air is heavy with a mist of spice,
Vervain and agrimony, clove and rue,
Have I not paid, have I not paid the price?
How shall these tempters torture me anew?

I close my eyes and dream the incense drifts
Over the monstrance, and the acolyte
Swings the gold censer. Then the vision lifts:
I know the poisonous joys I have to fight.

Day with its flowers and yellow butterflies,
Holds for my heart no pain, the wind is free
That blows upon my garden from far skies,
Yet may I hold it in white chastity.

But night!—and the still air!—Ah, God above,
Have I the strength to wage thy war anew?
Blot out my senses or I die for love,—
Vervain and agrimony, clove and rue!

BIANCA

THE orchard apples hung above,
Golden and red and green,
Her face beneath was ripe for love,
Cat-eyed with sparks between.

Simple she came to gather there
With hands of ivory;
Gold fillets bound her golden hair;
Her gown was cramosie.

She plucked the herbs with subtle grace,
Derisive in her deed.
Was there no Prince to read her face,
No Prince with Beauty's need?

Her hands with cassia buds were sweet:
"Come, love," her young heart cried,
The Prince with delicate swift feet,
Was even at her side!

Her tamed white leopard leaped in fear,
Love beckons love so soon.
They gathered no more simples there,
The long late afternoon.

FREE

BEYOND the hill the hearth fires burn,
A hundred flags in air,
But one which tossed but yesterday
Is dead, one hearth is bare.

The wife whose fingers fed the fire
Grew weary of the play,
A lad laughed thro' the open door
And stole my dear away.

And now alone I face the road;
No hearth, no home for me.
And yet—Ah Life!—come sun, come rain,
My beggar soul is free.

OF C.

BLACK AND GOLD

ROUND her knees her lovers yearned,
 She who sat in black and gold,
What recked she who begged or burned,
 Sister to the gods of old.

Darkness was her pedigree,
 Light her ever living flame,
Lovers die for such as she,
 Paying for her smiles with shame.

Round her head the music floats,
 Black by night and gold by day;
These are Time's inchoate notes,
 Calling, "Sister, come away."

Bride of eager-blooded gods,
 Wife to man's primeval age,
What to her shall serve these clods
 Save to irk her pilgrimage?

THE ANSWER

THE themes of women! Mounting up the sky,
Beating the air with tremulous weak wings,
How shall so small a matter win so high,
The vain sweet goal of their imaginings?

Striving for Beauty, dark philosophy,
Or the obscure and purple deeps of truth,
How shall they know their one great verity,
The answer to their queries and their youth?

Simple vain themes of women! Only this
One theme may lift their wings to goals
above,—
To spill their hearts out blindly in a kiss,
An infinite surrendering to love.

PEACE

NIGHT thundered down the valley
From off the rocky steeps,
Like wind it broke the silences
That light divinely keeps.

As low dark clouds concealing
The things one dare not see,
So grimly dark and ominous
Hung low each shadowy tree.

Night, the dread terror-master,
What wordless woe he weaves!
Suddenly peace, and all the air
Is scented with green leaves.

BARNABAS

THEY all are dead but Barnabas; he'll wait,
With his old groping hands and haggard eyes,
Which nothing in the world can now surprise,
Till the last leaf whirls thro' the clanging gate
Of the last sunrise. Did he learn too late?

Maybe, that one may hear the moans and cries
That ring by night, and yet be calm and wise.
And teach the women how a man can hate!

I did not think a soul could live so long,
And be so little. He remembers youth
With a wry smile of disbelief; the wrong
Was this, he squeezed the fruit so dry
So long ago; and now must live, forsooth
Because a woman will not let him die.

LOST DREAMS

COMING thro' the porch of dreams
To the portal of the day,
Vacant all the ether seems
With a grief that leaves her grey.

In a threnody of sighs,
With the cloud wreaths 'round her face,
Morning veils her heavy eyes,
Weeping for her vanished grace.

Ah! in gaining lusty Dawn,
Life, and pleasant facts of light,
Why must we, the darkness gone,
Lose the dreams that haunt the night?

LADY OF LIGHT

LIGHT of the World, what are violets but eyes of
you,

Perfume, your hair blowing back on the
breeze,

Ah, but the fugitive dainty surprise of you,

Pricking in green on the blossomy trees.

Give me the sun of your smile to be fire to me,

Give me the moon when the passion is gone,

Give me the light to be dream and desire to me

Down the dark alleys that lead to the dawn.

SONG

You are the dawning of dreams.

You are the end of desire.

You are the gladness and glory that seems

Dauntless, to urge and aspire.

Cradle my soul on your wings,

Cradle my head on your breast.

Teach me the ardour that conquers and sings.

Grant me your infinite rest.

THE GYPSY BLOOD

BECAUSE the lover cares for daffodils

Must we be stranger to the passion flower,

Or slight the iris, dewy from a shower?

The gypsy heather bloom upon the hill

Strikes fiercely on a gypsy heart, and thrills

New argosies of dreams to sail the hours.

No rosy perfume blown from garden bowers

May bear the subtle perfume this distills.

Must we forego the dreamy twilight stars

Because the true-love lives for morning sun?

Love dare not hold the sense behind such bars.

The moon drips scented petals on our hair,

And gypsy hearts to gypsy flowers must run

While life is everything, tho' love be fair.

AND YET

INADEQUATE and void, the days
Are not more tired than tears;
And yet, how long, how long the ways,
Down the bare lane of years.

The bird that flutters from the nest
Is fused of fire and spring,
And yet how soon the throbbing breast
Will lose the life to sing.

How long the lane, how soon 'tis past,
Rough road, dark sky above,
And yet, dear heart, there's home at last,
With light, and life, and love!

THRO' THE
PLEACHED ALLEYS

THRO' the pleached alley in my garden of the
Spring

Merry leaves tossed over me with elfish whisper-
ing.

I was not alone, alone, for Love with blowing
hair

Touched my hands and touched my heart, danc-
ing everywhere.

Darting round about my steps, as a swallow
slips,

How she laughed and laughed at me, with little
rosy lips,

Ghostly wise she kissed my eyes, her mouth was
chill as snow,

For she had died, my Love had died, so very
long ago.

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